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Site-specificity, archaeology and the empty space at the contemporary Rose playhouse

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In a 2013 revival of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at the Southwark fringe venue known as the Rose Playhouse, the titular characters interrupted a rehearsal not, as in the original text, for Pirandello's own play *Mixing It Up*, but for Shakespeare's *Henry V*. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* uses the citation of another play to establish a baseline for the relationship between drama and real life which is subsequently disrupted by the intervention of six characters who demand that their story be performed. The characters' drama queries boundaries between the stage and the real world, and challenges the assumption that the latter is a more authentic site of experience. In this instance, the first chorus of *Henry V*, beginning 'O for a Muse of fire,' functioned as a model for theater that is safely distinguished from the real, given the attention drawn in this speech to the inability of theatrical re-enactment to recreate the battle of Agincourt. In particular, the speech calls attention to the theater space in order to stress its dissimilarity from the place it will be called upon to represent: 'this unworthy scaffold,' 'this cockpit,' 'this wooden O,' as juxtaposed with 'the vasty fields of France' (1.0.10-13). The production at the Rose amplified the dissonance between Shakespeare and Pirandello, or between theatrical artificiality and realism, by mapping the relationship between the early modern and the modernist against the unique space of that venue - the site of Philip Henslowe's 1587 Rose, now the backdrop for a studio theater. In effect, the production contrived to stage Pirandello's convention-smashing play amidst the literal ruins of a theater whose tradition is now referred to in the parlance of actor training as 'classical.'

Complex engagements with theatrical history are made possible by such a space. In this essay, I explore some of these, considering the Rose in relation to several types of performance space: Elizabethan playhouses; the 'traditional' (predominantly Victorian) auditoria of London's West End; the 'black box,' or what Peter Brook called an 'empty space' - and in relation to site-specific performances. Michael Shanks and Mike Pearson have explored the relationship

between site-specific performance and archaeology in *Theatre/Archaeology*, and their disciplinary dialogues inform my analysis. I discuss several recent productions of early modern plays at the Rose, whose program is weighted in favor of the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries – perhaps a natural emphasis, given its location at the archaeological site constituting a significant source of material evidence on Elizabethan playing practices. Focusing on moments in these productions where the unique qualities of the Rose’s performance space were utilized, I suggest that the case study of the Rose invites a new approach to site-specificity which might inform responses to other performance sites. Eleanor Rycroft’s contribution to this special issue demonstrates how ‘there may be varying densities of place-as-place and place-as-theater invoked at different times during [a] drama’ (5). The Rose introduces a third position – place-as-ruin. The auditorium layout gestures towards the representation of the former Rose as a place (that is, as a fixed, named locale, with specific associations), but at the same time, its physical characteristics militate against engaging with place as a form of continuity. In effect, the Rose allows for a variety of site-specificity which makes lack and absence visible, rather than trying to elide it.

Shanks and Pearson identify three main points of contact between their respective disciplines which they designate ‘theatre archaeology,’ ‘theatre and archaeology’ and ‘theatre/archaeology.’ The first is concerned with ways of reading the material remnants of performance (13). This is precisely the ‘theatre archaeology’ that has been deployed to such effect at the Rose: its excavation provided evidence about the use and architecture of an early modern theater building which has since been invaluable to researchers’ understandings of Elizabethan performance. My interest in this article is informed instead by ‘theatre and archaeology’ – the re-enactment and representation of the past at heritage sites – and by ‘theatre/archaeology,’ the complex interpenetration of site and work and the potential of a site and its former uses to infuse performances (68, 131). Given that the Rose was and is a theater, it offers an unusual case study for Shanks and Pearson’s models, which on the whole focus on sites that are ‘free from conventions of dramatic exposition’ (111). Oversaturated in conventions of dramatic exposition both past and present, sometimes at odds with one another,

the Rose presents modern performances as re-enactments, inflected by the complex history of the archaeological site.

Performances at the Rose provide heightened instances of the phenomenon Matthew Wagner terms 'temporal thickness' in *Shakespeare, Theatre and Time*: the 'layering of past, present and future as one experience' that he argues is characteristic both of early modern drama and, especially, of its contemporary performance (13). Clare Wright's article in this special issue identifies 'temporal collapse' as an attribute of performance which becomes more apparent if we abandon the assumption that a distinct separation exists between the play world and the real world (10). Wagner also remarks on temporal 'dissonance' – the uneasy coexistence of multiple time frames, which erode one another's singularity and authority (8). These terms are useful in relation to the Rose's space, which, as I will show in my analysis of performances, is both layered and divided. Jonathan Gil Harris's reassessment of early modern material culture in a polytemporal context in *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* provides a further metaphor, that of 'palimpsested time' (1) (a metaphor which, like that of archaeology, has been deployed by theorists of site-specific performance, notably in Nick Kaye's *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* [11]). The case studies below explore ways of staging both contact and distance between early modern texts and contemporary performances, considering this ambivalence in relation to the Rose's divided performance space and its archaeological significance.

The original Rose site was excavated in 1989 by Museum of London archaeologists. The site, recently cleared at that time by the demolition of the 1957 office block Southbridge House, was already under contract to developers Imry Merchant for a new ten-storey building. The archaeologists managed to expose two thirds of the Rose footprint, and to identify distinct phases of the building's existence: the initial playhouse was built in 1587; substantial alterations were finished in 1592 (as recorded in an early entry of Henslowe's 'Diary,' which is an itemized expenditure of over £105 on building materials and costs [Foakes, 9]). The excavation also investigated a third phase, from about 1600, when the theater fell into disuse until its demolition in 1606. The foundations showed that the playhouse had been a fourteen-sided polygon with a 71-foot diameter and

revealed the shape of the stage both before and after the alterations. Artefacts dropped by theatergoers, including rings and coins, were found in what had been the yard, and further tests on the soil revealed information about the Elizabethan audience's diet. The Rose dig is widely credited as a major influence on the design of the 1997 reconstructed Globe, now standing a short distance away on the bank of the Thames.ⁱ

After two thirds of the site had been uncovered, money ran out and the developers were anxious to move ahead with construction. Public outcry, supported by prominent actors including Ian McKellen, eventually led to a compromise. The foundations of the new building were redesigned so that the structure would stand on massive arches over the Rose site, now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument under the jurisdiction of Historic England. The remains of the playhouse, hitherto well preserved by the damp, boggy ground under this part of Southwark, had begun to dry out now that they were exposed. Awaiting funds to complete the excavation, the site was re-buried under a covering of sand, water and concrete, with a system of pipes that allow the state of the Rose foundations to be monitored from ground level. The archaeological site remains hidden from public view to this day, preserved while the Rose Theatre Trust struggle to raise the necessary £7 million to complete the excavation. In 2015, the Trust raised concerns about the vulnerability of the remains, given that the silt underneath Southwark is at the mercy of the tidal Thames, and argued that the completion of the Rose excavation is a matter of considerable urgency. In the meantime, the site endures in a provisional state, as an unfinished archaeology project, a buried theater of the past.

The Rose re-opened as an exhibition space in 1999, displaying information about Henslowe, the playhouse and the dig alongside the site itself: invisible underneath its protective covering but marked out with the red neon strip-lighting which outlines the shape of the original 1587 playhouse and its amended 1592 structure. So close to the better funded and more elaborate Globe exhibition, and tucked away in an ignominious back street, it was relatively sparsely visited, and in 2000 the venue began to host performances in the exhibition space overlooking the site as a way of attracting visitors and raising awareness.ⁱⁱ Since then it has operated as a theater, subject to a heightened version of the instability

afflicting so many arts venues in times of austerity – the current Rose is a space for ephemeral fringe performances only until such time as economic forces mandate either its closure or its repurposing for further archaeological explorations. The projected final form of the Rose site includes its use as a performance venue, but presumably in a form considerably altered from its current state. The contemporary Rose stages performances in the time between excavation and restoration: as repetition, as reminder, as attempts to make contact with the ‘other’ time that lies unresolved under its floor.

The rectangular room is now set up for performances with seating for fifty audience members on three sides. The main performance space backs onto a metal railing: the viewing platform from which visitors can inspect the strip-lit outlines of the original Rose. However, within the strict guidelines established by the custodians of the site, productions are also able to make use of some of the space beyond the railing: the concrete ledge on the far side of the basement, and the ‘shore’ at the edge of the pool of water which fills the space directly above the archaeological remains. The result is an unusual divided performance space, where there is the option of setting off the intimacy of the ‘black box’ against a significant spatial alienation. Theater director Jenny Eastop, who has mounted four productions at the Rose, suggested to me that using the extra space is an opportunity ‘to take the audience’s eye far away from the small stage area and open up the scene to something vast and cavernous.’ Given that the standard performance space rests over the as yet unexcavated third of the 1587 Rose’s footprint, using the rest of the site also represents a step closer to the buried early modern theater.

In twenty-first century London, the Rose is in good company as a venue that proposes to put early modern and contemporary performance into contact with one another. The reconstructed Globe is a few moments’ walk away, now supplemented by the indoor venue, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. The successes and shortcomings of the Globe have been discussed at length. Bridget Escolme has suggested that performance there should be understood as ‘site-specific’ on the grounds that ‘it defamiliarizes the experience of watching the work of acting and foregrounds the space in which that work is taking place’ (521). Many audience members at the Globe and Sam Wanamaker attend as much to see

the spaces in use as to see the specific performance: the elaborately decorated auditoria draw attention to themselves as reproductions of historical buildings. By contrast, although the Rose is usually arranged with audience on three sides of the main performance space in a minor concession to the layout of its early modern predecessor, it does not present itself as a historical reconstruction.

Catherine Silverstone observes that performances at the Globe rely on a shared imaginative exercise which allows actors and audiences to feel closer to early modern performance: 'motivated by a desire to reconstruct and invoke the absent Globe, and by extension Shakespeare' (34). The degree of the audience's complicity and participation in this project, of course, varies from one performance to the next and is almost impossible to measure. Some spectators, unaware that the modern Globe is a reconstruction, have the imagined experience of walking precisely in Shakespeare's footsteps. Others see the building's failures at early modern mimicry more prominently than any other feature. Bowsher suggests that 'the Wanamaker Globe is [. . .] an academic product of its time' ('Twenty Years On,' 455) – its architectural mimicry limited by twentieth century building regulations, its dimensions based on the best available estimates of the 1599 structure. During Dominic Dromgoole's artistic directorship, designers frequently built the Globe stage out into the yard with supplementary platforms and walkways to privilege the venue's communality at the expense of historical authenticity. Tom Cornford has analyzed this practice, suggesting that it 'undermines the basic contract established with an audience by this allegedly historically accurate reconstruction' (326).

The Rose's relationship to its Elizabethan predecessor is felt not in architectural mimicry but in its sense of theatrical haunting – it does not ask that audiences imaginatively close the gap between the early modern theater and the contemporary one, but rather that they maintain an awareness of the past theater beneath the present one. Marvin Carlson has discussed the impact of various types of 'ghosting' on the reception of performances, including the potential of theater space to inflect the meaning of performances held there: he explains that 'the "something else" that this space was before, like the body of the actor that exists before it is interpolated into a character, has the potential, often realized, of "bleeding through" the process of reception' (133). This effect was perhaps at its

most acute in the 2014 production of Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, which was informed by awareness that the performance marked the 450th anniversary of Marlowe's birth, that the play had had its premiere on the same site, and that it had been the playwright's last before his untimely death. In this case, and to a lesser extent in *The Devil is an Ass*, discussed below, the performance event draws attention to the continuity of the site from early modern to present day: *The Massacre at Paris* haunted by the echoes of its own first performance, *The Devil is an Ass* by less specific specters of the early modern city beneath and before the modern one. In this respect, the venue's site-specificity can be conceived in a more straightforward and robust model than that of the Globe – it is a space for re-enactment on the same ground as the original event, a model seen frequently in outdoor performances at heritage sites, for instance, in the Globe's 2013 tour of its *Henry VI* cycle to four battlefields depicted in the plays.ⁱⁱⁱ

'Site-specific' is not a straightforward term in performance studies. Joanne Tompkins has highlighted the difficulty of defining 'site-specific' performance despite its increasing popularity since the 1990s, given 'the propensity for the boundaries of both "site" and "performance" to slip' (1). Some definitions would exclude performances of early modern drama on the grounds that they involve a pre-existing text. Fiona Wilkie distinguishes between the 'site-specific' ('performance specifically generated from/for one selected site') and the 'site-sympathetic' ('existing performance text physicalized in a selected site') (150). Both terms run into some complications when presented with the Rose, particularly for the Marlowe and early Shakespeare texts which had their earliest performances on the same site - though early modern scholars would dispute whether they were generated 'specifically' for it, since at least some of them were also performed in provincial inn yards and at court. Shanks and Pearson also maintain that site-specific performances are

conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces [. . .] They rely, for their conception and their interpretation, upon the coexistence, superimposition and interpenetration of a number of narratives and architectures. (23)

These definitions highlight the different varieties of partial site-specificity on display at the Globe and the Rose. The Globe's imitation of the 'particulars' of an early modern space, and its capacity to 'perform' and illuminate facets of the text which may be obscured by other theatrical styles and spaces, presents early modern texts conditioned by their architectural framing. The Rose, meanwhile, represents early modern theater architecture only as an absence. Kaye provides a more flexible, permissive definition: 'site-specificity arises precisely in uncertainties over the borders and limits of work and site' (215). Performances at the Rose that range across the porous boundaries between stage and site, between theater and archaeology, heighten such uncertainties.

Rebecca Schneider's discussion of the complex temporal layering provoked by performance offers yet another angle on this peculiar variety of site-specificity. Her work problematizes generic, artistic and temporal categories of performance by discussing the phenomenon of Civil War re-enactment in the United States alongside canonical performance events by the likes of Marina Abramović and the Wooster Group. She observes that

[i]n the syncopated time of reenactment, where *then* and *now* punctuate each other, reenactors in art and war romance and/or battle an "other" time and try to bring that time – that prior moment – to the very fingertips of the present. (2)

Schneider discusses performance and re-performance as activities with the potential to rupture, bend and repeat accepted chronologies and to produce uncanny experiences of time. This model treats the qualities of a site like the Rose as dormant or latent, to be activated by (re)performance. In the performances discussed below, the presence of actors speaking the words of early modern dramatists (and often wearing early modern costume) wakes the ghosts of the space and allows the audience to feel that they are in contact with the experience of the early modern playhouse. Again, this effect is not measurable – individual critics and practitioners have remarked upon the Rose's historical significance, but it is hard to judge when that significance is only a marketing advantage and when it becomes an awareness that intrudes upon the sensory and imaginative

experience of performers and audiences. In my discussion of how the Rose resists categorization and how theater practitioners have adapted their dramaturgy to suit the space, I aim to show how the Rose might typify an ambivalent model of site-specificity.

The physical features of the Rose emphasize its dissimilarity from its Elizabethan predecessor. The indoor, concrete basement with its red strip lighting and exposed pipes for monitoring the archaeological site is a strange monument to an outdoor amphitheater. In many respects, the venue more closely resembles myriad black boxes of the London fringe scene. David Wiles observes that although the black box is often conceived as 'the quintessential "empty space," the form that responded best to the complex of aesthetic demands made by [Peter] Brook in 1967/8,' such spaces actually make 'a historically specific architectural statement just as forcefully as Shakespeare's Globe' (249). I want to consider both these positions in relation to the Rose. Brook famously promised that he could 'take any empty space and call it a bare stage' (9), leading Carlson to contend that Brook's 'use of the term *empty* suggests a phenomenological ground-zero that is [. . .] not accurate' (133). The black box as an unmarked space which does not impose any prior reading onto the performance created within it – the antithesis of site-specificity – seems entirely at odds with the over-determined theatrical space of the Rose auditorium. Though the archaeological site is not visible, its intrusions into the chilly basement space militate against that space being deployed as a neutral starting point for performance. The strip lighting, though not always illuminated, offers to make the covered remains of the Rose visible at least by proxy. Nonetheless, the shape of the site demands that performances are structured *around* the empty space of the Rose itself, which cannot be walked on and is covered by a pool of water. In this venue, then, Brook's conceptual emptiness is unattainable, but is replaced by the unusual mandate of a literal empty space which can be deployed in performances to dramatize *distance*, and which marks the absence of the early modern playhouse hidden underneath the floor. The central 'empty space' at the Rose invokes Joseph Roach's understanding of performance as 'a substitute for something that pre-exists it' (3) – an extended funeral for a lost theater.

Wiles's contention that the black box format imposes its own 'historically specific architectural statement' is more productive. In over-crowded London, many fringe spaces could claim sufficient history to inflect performances – theaters occupy the back rooms of pubs (many of them Victorian or older), the brick arches underneath railway tracks, the former premises of philanthropic associations, World War II air-raid bunkers and deconsecrated churches. However, as Wiles observes, the economics of fringe theater frequently demand that venues be functionally interchangeable 'to serve the needs of a project-funded touring circuit, where shows can be slotted in and out, free from any need to create a dialectic with the architectural frame' (262). The Rose's rectangular main space, three entrances and predominantly dark (if not uniformly black) walls conform to the conventions of the black box. Black box settings, Wiles argues, encourage abstraction, rule out 'Ibsenesque' naturalism, and construct their audience as isolated individuals, alone with their imaginations in the darkened performance space (257). Though Wiles's account of black box performance relies on generalizations, these observations are relevant to the Rose, whose limited capacity for set inclines performances towards abstraction. His suggestion that black box theaters tend to produce deadened acoustics which strip the words of a performance 'to their bare semantic function' is, of course, not applicable to the Rose, whose cavernous dimensions allow the words spoken in it to 'resonate' (258).

Black box fringe venues are often attached to the idea of 'intimacy,' conceived in its most straightforward form as an effect of physical proximity between actor and audience. Josephine McMahon has expanded upon this to suggest that intimacy is connected to a heightened awareness of the performance space – as a sensory experience which is shared with the other participants (93). Sarah Dustagheer in this special issue provides a detailed consideration of intimacy as an attribute of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, including the impact of lighting and sound quality. Perhaps particularly for early modern drama, intimacy might be understood as a way of making the performance more comprehensible if, for instance, it allows actors' facial expressions to be more readily visible on occasions when the language proves difficult. Physical proximity, heightening the sense of sharing the space, live, with the actors,

moderates the historical and cultural distance between early modern plays and contemporary audiences. The main space at the Rose is intimate in terms of proximity and since there is no barrier or difference of level between the actors and the audience. However, the space is often chilly; the sound quality is affected by the concrete and water surroundings; the limits of the space are cavernous and uncertain rather than embracing. The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, prior to its redevelopment completed in 2010, was notorious for imposing a physical distance between actor and audience: Baliol Holloway complained in 1934 that performing there was 'like acting to Calais from the cliffs of Dover' (quoted in Beauman, 113). At the Rose, the performance space is divided between the intimacy of the black box and, occasionally, the exaggerated distance associated with stiff, alienating classical theater - with the pool of water marking the empty space where the 1587 Rose stood between. Meanwhile, the sense of 'presence' provoked by the site's archaeological significance demands an awareness of the real space which works against the isolating effect of the black box to construct the audience as a community, sharing in a haunted space and in the imaginative project of experiencing that haunting.

Directors at the Rose have explored a variety of ways of mobilizing the divided space and of using it to perform, confront or collapse the historical and cultural distance between the audience and the text. *The Massacre at Paris*, perhaps the most self-conscious re-enactment of the productions discussed here, made no use of the distant performance space on the far side of the site. Director James Wallace staged Marlowe's play as a fast-paced, postmodern pastiche, setting sequences to 1950s rock and roll music, clothing its villains in leather jackets and sunglasses, and staging every death in the titular massacre with showers of red confetti. In this case, the ruins of the theater which housed the original 1593 performance of the same play were invoked only as an empty space to magnify the scale of the events on the small stage, both acoustically and in the moment when the Duke of Guise (John Gregor) looked out over the water with binoculars as he detailed in soliloquy his plans for the St Bartholomew's Day massacre. The productions discussed in the remainder of this essay made more extensive use of the divided performance space to draw attention to spatial, temporal and

emotional distances within the narratives of the plays and/or to confront the distance between those plays and today's audiences.

The significant gap between the intimate and distant performance spaces has potential to exaggerate distances and divisions present in the play texts. Robert Weimann's concepts of *locus* and *platea* provide a framework for thinking about the effect the Rose's division of space could have on the performances mounted therein. Weimann suggests that distinct levels of intimacy between audience and fiction are characteristic of early modern drama (please see introduction). In a space of the Rose's exaggerated dimensions, Weimann's model is a useful starting point for understanding the ways in which spatial configurations can determine the elements of a performance that become privileged. As a result of the site's historical significance, the binary of *locus* and *platea* becomes tangled with that of early modern and contemporary. The main space allows for a certain degree of intimacy, where characters can interact with audience members (as in *Twelfth Night* discussed below), while the other space is distant and untouchable, implying that we are watching two varieties of theater simultaneously. The early modern heritage of the site and the vintage of most of the texts performed there might be aligned with what is distant, strange and untouchable in this theater. At the same time, the literal presence of the early modern theater as archaeological remains mitigates the sense that early modern drama is distant and alien. If the Rose's division of space makes *locus* and *platea* appear geographically fixed rather than, as Erika T. Lin suggests, flexible, it also co-opts both positions for an ambivalent site-specificity which allows performances to flicker between a *locus* position where the early modern is distant, alien and chilly, and a *platea* position where the early modern may be in dialogue with the contemporary audience.

In the final part of this essay, I consider the use of performance space in three recent productions at the Rose: *The Devil is an Ass* (directed by Jenny Eastop, 2015), *Twelfth Night* (directed by Sean Turner, 2013) and *Macbeth* (directed by Benjamin Blyth, 2015).^{iv} Ben Jonson's comedy *The Devil is an Ass* depicts a devil's attempts to cause trouble in Jacobean London, only to find that he is no match for the corruption of the city.^v In the 2015 Rose production, Eastop chose to use the supplementary performance space to represent Hell, taking advantage of the

built-in division to mark the difference between two planes of being. The production opened with the titular devil, Pug (Lewis Chandler), standing isolated on the ledge across the cellar, bathed in red light, and interrogated by the booming tones of an unseen Satan. Repeating the satirical trajectory of Jonson's original, the choice allows the audience to feel distanced from the devil in a way which is, at the outset, consoling, but which gradually implicates them in the corruption of the city which even Pug finds shocking. Jonson's play is rich in asides and disguises; characters frequently address the audience while other characters remain oblivious. For these purposes, it was of course necessary for both of Weimann's performance modes to be available within the limited space of the main stage. The scenes in Hell occupy a heightened *locus*, performed in a more abstract and grandiose style, and dominated by the disembodied voice of Satan – whose complete absence from the space disables any potential for a two-way engagement with the audience.

The Devil is an Ass used the Rose's divided space to indicate the difference between the terrestrial and infernal, but in doing so emphasized the audience's complicity in a Jacobean London which they might otherwise have felt was alien from their own. If the distant performance area is Hell, then the area occupied by the audience stands in for Jonson's London, and the unseen presence of the remains of the Rose (though it was demolished a decade before *The Devil is an Ass* was first staged) functions as confirmation of material continuity between Jonson's London and our own. Eastop explained to me that the Rose's divided space provides an opportunity to present different locations to the audience in such a way that they are experienced effectively as different genres; scenes staged on the foundations offer 'a completely different feel' from those staged in the main space. The Jacobean comedy of the London scenes could thus be contrasted with the declamatory style of the Hell scenes, perhaps evoking the devils of the previous century's morality plays. Given that the generic divide here is also a historical one, the production could be said to have performed the stratigraphy of the archaeological site, exposing the theatrical foundations underlying Jonson's play. In this respect the production emphasized what Wagner calls 'temporal thickness' – the simultaneous experience of multiple times as layers of the same performance. The play was given in Jacobean costume but with only suggestive

set, using chairs and swathes of fabric to hint at a variety of architectures – in this respect, the visual effect mirrored the Rose’s ambivalent negotiation of the early modern theater as both present and absent, proximate and alien. The performance asserted material continuity from an early modern London for which the Rose remains function as synecdoche, and allowed the ‘temporal thickness’ of the site to inform the play’s comic manipulation of genre (Wagner, 13).

Productions of better-known plays, particularly those of Shakespeare, often take greater liberties with eclectic costume and mixed period details (though, by contrast, they are usually far more conservative when it comes to cutting down the text).^{vi} *Twelfth Night* was performed at the Rose in 2013 by a company, Permanently Bard, best known for summer performances in pub beer gardens. Most of the action was limited to the main space; the intimacy of this space was further emphasized in scenes where Toby (Richard Fish) and Feste (Cameron Harle) sat down amongst or on audience members. The distant space opposite was used for Malvolio’s prison in act four, and was at one point reimagined as a riverbank where Toby was discovered peacefully fishing. In both instances, though with different effects, the distance was used simply to indicate separation or isolation from the activity in Olivia’s household. Toby’s retreat to the distant space positioned him as a figure of theatrical privilege, with the capacity to step outside the playing space and commentate upon it, in apparent reversal of the distribution of *locus* and *platea* invited by the divided space. Malvolio’s banishment to the far corner of the basement dramatized his incompatibility with a space increasingly being constructed as comic.

The distant space was also used on several occasions in *Twelfth Night* as a musician’s gallery and/or DJ booth - wittily remodeling the Elizabethan playhouse’s division of space between stage and gallery, and juxtaposing this with the aesthetics of the underground nightclubs that the Rose in some respects resembles. With the cast dressed in ostentatious period costume and the music ranging from folk to drum and bass to pop covers including George Michael’s ‘Faith’, the production’s (rather haphazard) mixed-period approach was expressed primarily as a dissonance between the visual and aural elements of the production. The performance opened with Orsino standing with his back to the audience to bellow the play’s famous opening line, ‘If music be the food of love,

play on' across the space, prompting a loud blast of electro music as the rest of the cast were revealed, lined up along the far wall, dancing under strobe lights. If the production meant to imagine the main stage as an early modern space and the distant 'musician's gallery' as a modern one, however, it disrupted this neat divide by introducing a digital camera and brightly colored shots of liquor to the main performance space. These deliberate anachronisms made the audience aware of 'temporal dissonance' between the play and its present performance (Wagner, 8). *Twelfth Night's* eclectic approach encouraged the audience to encounter the Rose auditorium as a space of both early modern and contemporary forms of entertainment, but did not consistently align this with the geography of the performance space.^{vii} As Eastop did in *The Devil is an Ass*, Turner emphasized the ambivalence of the space in *Twelfth Night*. The mingling of early modern and contemporary in the visual and aural texture of the production suggests that these times are entangled and mutually informative, but nonetheless the anachronisms are jarring, so they reassert the distance between the original and contemporary audiences. This ambivalence draws attention to the Rose's historical significance – it offers to give us a synthesized experience of past and present, but it also makes visible the strangeness of this combination.

Malachite Theatre, the company responsible for *Macbeth*, imagined their own activity in terms of its mimicry of early modern theater practitioners. They migrated from their usual performance venue at St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch – close to the site of James Burbage's The Theatre, and the grave site of his son Richard Burbage, the lead actor of the Lord Chamberlain's Men – to the Rose, following in the footsteps of 'Shakespeare and his first Macbeth' from Shoreditch to Southwark. The company described *Macbeth* in promotional material on the Rose website as 'site-specific.' This rhetorical gesture conceives not only the performance but the labor of producing it in what Schneider terms 'the syncopated time of re-enactment' (2) – *Macbeth* is treated as a re-enactment of a hypothetical Bankside premiere in 1606, while the company's journey south entails a further enfolding of past and present. This production made the most extensive use of the site among those discussed here (and indeed, of all the productions I have attended at the Rose).

Less self-consciously postmodern than *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth* used broadly twentieth-century costume but in a muted color palette and without conspicuous period-specific details. Blyth made the (not unusual) decision to keep the witches onstage throughout: a choice that is often taken to represent the constant presence of supernatural forces guiding the events of the play. The witches appeared exclusively on the far side of the space, on the shore of the artificial lake, except during the scenes where they were doubled with Banquo's murderers. The suggestion of supernatural control implicit in the witches' continued presence was countered by the theatrical dimensions of the space – the main stage is so close to the audience and the supplementary space so distant from them that what Lin calls 'theatrical privilege' is generally far higher in the main space; audiences are likely to allow the action in the main space to curate the more distant action for them rather than vice versa. The configuration of the space, then, is such that the witches appear as figments of the other characters' creation rather than as the controlling influence presiding over their actions.

The opening scenes of the play were entirely performed on the far side of the space – Banquo and Macbeth visited the witches' space rather than having the integrity of their own stage breached by apparitions. Lady Macbeth remained in the main space with the audience throughout this prologue, suggesting that what the audience see is an enactment of the story she receives in Macbeth's letter in act one, scene five.^{viii} The implication was that the performance on the far side of the space was mediated through Lady Macbeth's understanding of events as they were reported to her. Blyth cut and rearranged parts of the text to achieve this effect, explaining that he made 'a series of alterations ... to match the strange split-stage aesthetic offered by the Rose.' Conceiving the archaeological site as a site of flashback once again configures the division of space at the Rose as a temporal divide. Though *Macbeth* did not, as *Twelfth Night* did, use the chasm in the middle of the venue to address the distance between contemporary audience and early modern text, it did construct that distance as a representation of time passed (a technique also used in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, where flashbacks were performed as dance sequences in the distant performance area). Flashbacks that filter the fictional 'past' through one character's perspective are a device characteristic of cinema. This production's reorganization of *Macbeth*'s opening

scenes across two spaces demanded that the audience apply forms of media literacy learned from cinema and television in their apprehension of a medium more spatial than temporal. The effect, once again, was an experience of 'temporal thickness' as multiple past events – Macbeth and Banquo's meeting with the witches, Lady Macbeth's receipt of the letter, and an early modern performance of both these events – were re-enacted simultaneously.

Malachite Theatre's claim of site-specificity implies that this production was calculated as an attempt to use the space to activate particular elements of the text; the production used the space to dramatize differences of time and narrative privilege within the fiction of the play. The bold use of the space in *Macbeth* led to some legitimate complaints amongst the audience that some scenes were difficult to see or hear. This difficulty effectively 'othered' parts of the performance taking place outside the main performance area. Though its claim to site-specificity invited audiences to consider the long history of the play (as embedded in the theatrical culture of early modern Southwark), the production itself seemed to work against this, de-familiarizing *Macbeth* by fragmenting it into discrete chunks of narrative time. 'Temporal thickness' was evident in the layering of different events in the play over one another; 'temporal dissonance' was felt in the tension between site-specificity and a strikingly contemporary, even cinematic, interpretation of the play. By comparison, in *Twelfth Night's* more modest use of the space, it was possible to perform a more sustained engagement with the specificity of the Rose space as a palimpsest of contemporary fringe venue and early modern playhouse.

The interrelation of space and time at the Rose is particularly appropriate to an archaeological site. Shanks and Pearson approach site-specificity via archaeology as an opportunity to perform a variety of re-enactment which

make[s] no pretence at verisimilitude, which juxtapose[s] alternative interpretations simultaneously, which reveal[s] site continuously and which serve[s] to evoke rather than to monopolise meaning, rupturing rather than consoling. (119)

In this respect, the Rose has potential to supplement the work done at the reconstructed Globe as a self-consciously unstable, composite space for site-specific engagement with early modern drama – one which not only invites us to consider the presence of the early modern theater underpinning and informing the contemporary one, but which also insists that we remain aware of its absence and our own distance from it. The emphasis on archaeology at this site allows for engaging configurations of space as time: given that archaeology understands time in and as *depth*, the stratigraphy of the empty space at the Rose, reoriented laterally between the intimate and the distant performance spaces, can be deployed as an interrogative way of performing our ambivalent relationship to today's early modern performances as both new and old. Given that there is no in-house company, there has been limited potential for theater practitioners to become familiar with the space and explore different ways of using it. In this essay, I have suggested some ways of being sensitive to the space, which I hope may be explored further in the time remaining before excavations can be resumed on the site.

In many instances of site-specific performance, the effect of the site is compounded by its provisionality: the space of performance was formerly devoted to something else, and will be something else again once the performance is over. This too is true of the Rose: though it has endured twenty-seven years in this state, it remains an unfinished archaeology project. The provisional nature of the space adds to its capacity to haunt and inflect productions: the early modern theater is an unresolved and thus 'unfinished' presence in the Rose space. Performances of early modern drama at this venue insist upon the continuity of a tradition even while performing its loss. This ambivalence allows early modern texts to appear as both alien and familiar, both at home and not at home in the playhouse's composite space.

ⁱ Julian Bowsher and Andrew Gurr have discussed the findings from the Rose excavation and the questions that archaeologists hope to settle when the final third of the footprint can be exposed. A more detailed account of the dig and its findings is published in Bowsher and Pat Miller's 2009 book *The Rose and the Globe – playhouses of Shakespeare's bankside*.

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- ii The Globe Exhibition was on the site of the current Sam Wanamaker playhouse from 1996, and moved a short distance to its current location in 2000.
- iii The *Henry VI* production engaged in two distinct forms of site-specificity: at the Globe, where its performance gestured towards the authenticity of early performances of Shakespeare's plays, and on the battlefields, where the plays were instead conceived as gestures towards the historical events themselves, erasing not only the temporal disjuncture between past and present, but also the artistic filter of Shakespeare's version of events.
- iv The productions discussed here are selected because they all engaged closely with the space. Occasionally productions at the Rose attempt to use its space as they would that of any other theater – these productions would make a different case study but, I venture, would not significantly alter the conclusions. The venue's odd mixture of intimacy and strangeness inflect even performances which do not deliberately prod at the vexed question of archaeological – but not architectural – site-specificity.
- v Jonson's play was first performed in 1616; by this date the Rose had fallen out of use. According to editor Peter Happe, the play's first venue is most likely to have been the indoor Blackfriars playhouse (21).
- vi All these plays were cut to adhere to the Rose's 90-minute playing limit. Turner, a textually conscientious director, makes multiple versions of a given text available in the rehearsal room but used Keir Elam's 2008 Arden edition as principal text; his cuts did not extend to rearranging or rewriting the text. Blyth described his cut of *Macbeth* for the Rose as 'quite severe,' and added that the alterations were calculated to match the text to the space – excising elements of the text which seemed to relate specifically to an early modern amphitheater and thus purging the text of traces of any original 'site-specificity' owed to the Globe.
- vii Sean Turner, director of *Twelfth Night*, briefly described his rationale for the use of space as influenced by its 'historical importance.' Eastop and Blyth's more extensive comments deal with the physical attributes of the space and their theatrical effects, but they do not mention the Rose's spatial relationship to an early modern tradition.
- viii A stage direction at the beginning of Malachite Theatre's edited script for this production reads 'Enter the three Witches (BELOW) who remain ever-present and Lady Macbeth (ABOVE) reading a letter.' The shorthand 'below' for the archaeological site and 'above' for the main space echo the Globe's division of space between stage and gallery.

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